

# Forces

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## Pears

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## SHE SHALL HAVE CULTURE

Linda Ann Suddarth

My teacher asked me,  
and gave me a letter.  
I gave the letter to my mother,  
who asked my father,  
and he made a decision  
that would change  
my life forever.  
I didn't even know  
its meaning  
so foreign  
was the assignment.  
It sat lightly  
on my twelve-year-old  
shoulders  
so engrossed was I  
in my dolls,  
reading, and writing  
my first novel,  
*Women and the West!*  
I would much rather  
he had spent  
that money  
towards a canopy bed  
I so wanted.  
He declared:  
"She should have  
some culture."

Since landing in the new world  
I was the first  
of many generations of farmers  
to do it.  
Reminiscent of some old  
social custom  
of having the girl  
be civilized and exposing her.  
With that, my mother  
got busy at the sewing machine  
to make me a dress.  
So for three times,  
at three dollars per trip,

I got out of school,  
got on a school bus,  
and rode into  
Washington, D.C.  
to the national theater,  
into the wonder  
of red velvet chairs,  
the darkened room,  
and watched the lights  
come up  
on Leonard Bernstein  
and the young people's  
orchestra.



**PEARS** Alberto Gutierrez